



# STATE REPRESENTATIVE TINA ORWALL

## 33<sup>RD</sup> DISTRICT

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## 2010 Legislative Session Report

Spring 2010

Dear Neighbors,

It's good to be home after what sometimes seemed like a very long and often frustrating special session. But in the end we managed to preserve very critical services and we also prevented a general sales tax that would have impacted everybody.

Let's rewind to about this time last year. The world, the country and our state got hit with the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. Our state faced a huge revenue shortfall of \$9 billion, and the Legislature made it out on time and without raising new revenue. That's right, another 33 states in the nation—some with much smaller budget gaps, chose to raise taxes to balance their budgets, but we didn't. We responded to the challenge by cutting \$3.2 billion and filling-up the rest with federal recovery dollars and funds we had in reserves.

Fast-forward to today. On even years we hold short 60-day sessions in which we make adjustments to the biennial budget written the previous year. But, as we convened in Olympia in January, it was clear that the usual supplemental operating budget year would become a major rewrite of our two-year budget approved last spring.

The continued loss of revenues and the greater demand of services resulted in another budget gap, this time of \$2.8 billion. The answer was neither an all-cuts budget nor an all-taxes budget; we took a reasoned approach and balanced the budget with a combination of cuts and new revenue, but not quite with a "balance" of cuts and revenue. The 2009-2011 state budget raises \$1 in revenue for every \$4.40 in cuts. It is the first biennial budget since 1951 that is smaller than the one before it.

The revenue necessary to close the gap will come from closing corporate tax loop holes, removing sales tax exemptions for pop, gum and candy—all non-food items, and time-limiting increases in the B&O service tax.

While the budget was certainly the most pressing task we had to address this year, it wasn't the only one. ***We also enacted important public policies that will positively affect the lives of many Washingtonians. Inside this newsletter I'm sharing summaries of some of the key measures passed this year, including three of my bills that the governor signed into law.***

***It is a great honor to represent and serve you*** in our state capital. These are tough times and your continued trust and support mean the world to me. Please keep in touch with your comments, suggestions and ideas. And if you have questions on any of the legislative actions taken this year, by all means ask; I will do my best to get back to you in a timely manner. Sincerely,

Tina Orwall  
State Representative

# STATE REPRESENTATIVE **TINA ORWALL**

## PROTECTING GREEN RIVER VALLEY BUSINESSES (HB 2560)



The Green River Valley area is an economic powerhouse for the entire state. This is the region's largest manufacturing and distribution center, which provides over 86,000 jobs and has an annual economic activity of over \$22 billion. But these successful busi-

nesses are located in an area prone to significant flooding.

Last year's heavy rains damaged the Howard Hanson Dam posing a one in three risk of severe flooding. After some temporary repairs, the risk went down to one in 33, but the threat is still there. After the risk was assessed, insurance companies began cancelling many area businesses' insurance policies.

The federal government offers subsidized business flood insurance, but the coverage limits are not enough for some of these large companies, so they have to get additional coverage from private insurers, which can be extremely difficult.

In the event of a flood in this area, 22,000 residents would have to be evacuated and, if businesses were forced to shut down even if it were only for one day, we're looking at a potential loss of about \$60 million.

Sen. Karen Keiser and I worked with the insurance commissioner to come up with a solution to prevent flood fears from driving these businesses, and the many good jobs they provide, out of state. We introduced companion bills (HB 2560 & SB 6240), which will ensure that excess coverage is available for the businesses that need it.

If a study reveals that private insurers are not selling the coverage our businesses need—or that a competitive market doesn't exist in the area—then a temporary Joint Underwriting Association (JUA) can be created. The JUA would act as a non-profit last-resort insurance that would require insurance companies to band together to provide flood insurance coverage for up to \$5 million per business in the flood plain. If there is no flood, premiums can be refunded.

The House version of this bill was signed into law on March 29.



## EDUCATION

### *Race to the Top (SB 6696)*



We approved this legislation to better prepare Washington state for the Obama Administration's competitive education grant program known as Race to the Top (RTTT). The bill includes reform provisions such as a new accountability system to turn around low-performing schools, an updated evaluation system for teachers based on student achievement, and expanded teacher preparation opportunities to help more people who want to become teachers find quality prep programs.

### *Education Reform (HB 2776)*

Last session we approved a major overhaul of our state's K-12 funding system. Since the changes are very complex, a Quality Education Council was formed to implement the reforms over the next ten years. Their first set of recommendations is in House Bill 2776, which we passed this year. The bill establishes a new, simplified school funding model, requires a phase-in of smaller classes in kindergarten through 3rd grade by the 2015-16 school year, increases state funding for maintenance and operation costs, and implements a new pupil transportation funding method.

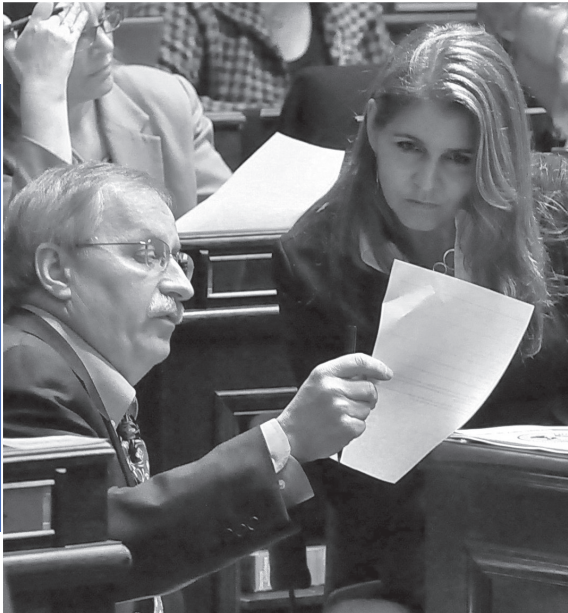
### *STEM instruction (HB 2621)*

This measure, which I sponsored, requires the superintendent of public instruction to designate three high schools to serve as "lighthouses" that offer technical assistance and advice to school districts and communities regarding best practices in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) instruction. One of the designated schools may be the Aviation High School in the Highline School District. The STEM schools have been effective in helping a wide range of students excel in math and sciences in preparation for college, as well as providing them with the skills to compete for high-tech job opportunities. We need to expand these best practices to all our schools.



# 2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

*Rep. Tina Orwall  
discussing  
legislation with  
the Speaker of  
the House,  
Frank Chopp.*



## **JOBS**

### ***The Washington Works Housing Act of 2010 (HB 2753)***

Many Washington workers such as teachers, nurses, and law enforcement officers, are struggling to find affordable housing near their schools, hospitals or police stations. This bill, which I prime sponsored, represents better living conditions for workers throughout the state and it will also create about 5,500 jobs over the next several years. Other benefits of having workers living 10 miles from their workplaces instead of 40 include less traffic, better environment and stronger communities.



This new law will provide access to federal housing resources for non-profit and public agency housing developers. It dedicates \$1 billion of the Housing Finance Commission's private debt capacity to implement the new Washington Works Housing Program.



This session I successfully secured \$25 million in the Capital Budget, which is the state's construction budget, to get the Housing Program started.

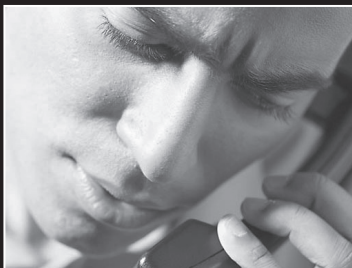
### ***The Jobs Act of 2010 (HB 2561)***

This was the very first bill that came to the floor of the House of Representatives this session. If this measure is approved by the voters in November, it will create about 38,000 construction jobs all over the state by funding projects repairing public schools and universities, and making these facilities more energy-efficient. It will save taxpayers \$190 million a year in energy costs, and Washington kids will have safer, healthier schools.



## **FORECLOSURE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EXPANDED**

I have been working hard to help our district through the foreclosure crisis. This year I fought for and secured \$500,000 in the budget for additional foreclosure counselors, as well as a review to ensure that the state is doing everything we can to promote loan modifications and communications between lenders and borrowers. With assistance getting in contact with the right people and accessing the right programs, many families facing foreclosure can stay in their homes. So far, over 5,000 people have avoided foreclosure by using this service. I am proud to be able to help expand this program.



If you need assistance with foreclosure counseling, call 1-877-894-HOME (1-877-894-4663).



# STATE REPRESENTATIVE TINA ORWALL

## BALANCING THE BUDGET



We enacted an all-cuts biennial budget last year in the face of the global financial meltdown. In that 2009-2011 operating budget, we made \$3.2 billion in cuts to plug a big portion of the \$9 billion revenue hole. The cuts were made across-the-board. For example, we reduced the Student Achievement Program from \$458 to \$99 per student. We also slashed the Basic Health Plan by 43 percent, we removed 50 boards and commissions, and we eliminated 4,000 full-time state-employee positions.

But the economy remained in freefall. When we came back to Olympia in January we had to face another \$2.8 billion problem.

After the deep reductions we made last session, filling the current hole with cuts alone would be too devastating to our long-term economic health. Our families and our businesses depend on high-quality schools, colleges and

universities, as well as strong work-force training, safe communities, efficient transportation and freight systems, and access to affordable health care.

So instead of another all-cuts budget, we found a balance through selective additional reductions and new revenue.

Here is a sample of things that would not be possible without new revenue. This year's budget pays for:

- K-12 Levy Equalization, all day Kindergarten, Gifted program
- Health coverage for 16,000 low-income children;
- State Need Grants for 12,000 deserving college students;
- Work study for 9,400 working college students;
- Basic health care for 60,000 Washington men and women;
- Early learning for more than 1,500 three-year-olds;
- Programs so that 42,000 senior citizens and disabled citizens can live in their homes instead of having to be institutionalized.

For details on the budget and the revenue package, please go here: <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/leap>

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